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RESEARCH BRIEF: SEX OFFENDERS

A Project of the RESEARCH Division

Part One of Six

How Many Sex Offenders Are There? And, Where Are They?

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The sex offender population is of great interest and concern to correctional staff because of perceived growth and special programming needs for this population. This is the first in a series of six research briefs that will present information on this population. The purposes of this first research brief are: (1) to define the sex offender population; (2) to consider the placement of this population within the Department; and, (3) to compare the current sex offender population with that of the past.

Defining the Sex Offender

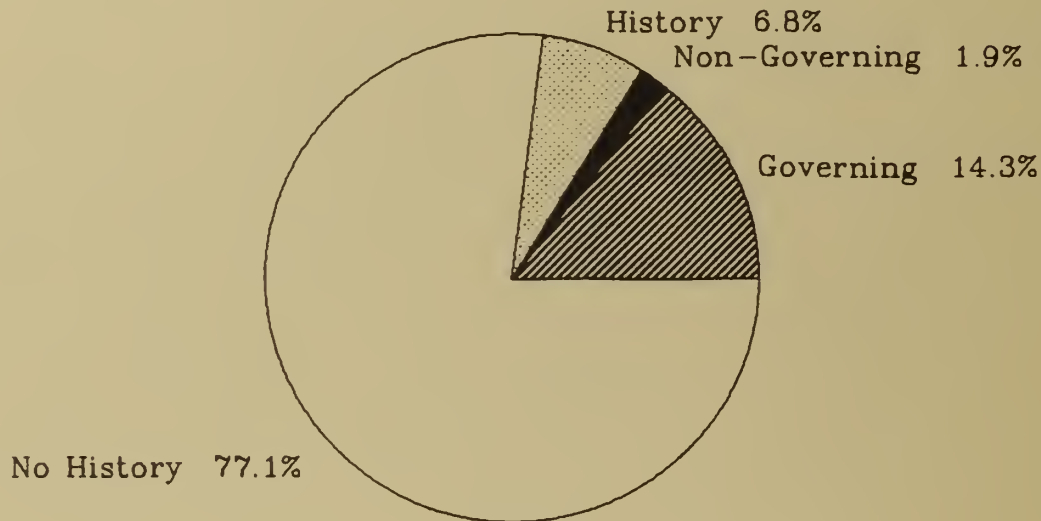
There is no statutory definition of a sex offender. Certain offenses, such as rape or indecent assault and battery, come to mind when considering the sex offender. Other offenses, such as lewdness, indecent exposure, or prostitution, are sexually related, but are less obviously sex offenses. There are also certain crimes such as arson, larceny, or homicide, which may be related to sexual gratification on the part of the offender, but which do not have a clear relation with sexual behavior.

For purposes of the current analysis, a sex offender is defined as someone whose governing or non-governing offense is a violation of the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 265 sections 13B, 13F, 13H, 22(previous), 22(a), 22(b), 22A, 23, 24, or 24B, or Chapter 272 sections 17, 35, or 35A. Thus, this operational definition includes those individuals incarcerated for rape, sexual assault, unnatural acts, and incest. Excluded are other offenses of a sexually related nature and sexually motivated offenses. Also excluded are individuals whose sex offenses were not among the first four offenses for which they were incarcerated.

How Many Sex Offenders Are There?

As of January 1, 1988, the DOC had a population of 6,265 of which 14.3% had a sex offense as their governing offense. In addition, 1.9% of the DOC population had a sex offense as a non-governing offense and a non-sex offense as the governing offense. *Overall, 16.2% of the DOC population was incarcerated for a sex offense as a governing or non-governing offense.* This represented an actual population of 1,012 offenders.

Sex Offenders in the DOC



DOC Residents on January 1, 1988

In addition, 6.8% of the population were not incarcerated for a sex offense but had a criminal history that included one or more charges for sex offenses. These charges did not necessarily represent convictions for such offenses.

What are the governing offenses?

Table 1 shows the twelve offenses for which sex offenders were incarcerated along with the number and proportion of the sex offender population which they represent. As of January 1, 1988, the most common offenses for which sex offenders were incarcerated were rape of child (30.9%), rape (28.4%), and aggravated rape (21.4%).

The twelve offenses were further grouped into two categories: (1) those involving a minor as the victim; and, (2) those involving an adult victim or those where the victim's age is not specified in the offense. Overall, 63.2% of the sex offenders had one or more charges where the victim was an adult, and 42.4% of the sex offenders had one or more offenses where the victim was a minor.

In the case of those sex offenders whose governing offense was not a sex offense, their governing offenses included homicide, robbery, kidnapping, armed assault, and burglary. (See Table 2.)

Table 1. Present Offense of Sex Offenders, January 1, 1988 and 1978

	1988		1978	
	%	(N)	%	(N)
Aggravated Rape	21.4%	(217)	N.A.	(N.A.)
Rape	28.4%	(287)	61.6%	(212)
Assault W.I. Rape	14.1%	(143)	14.2%	(49)
Indecent A & B on Person 14 or Over	4.6%	(47)	N.A.	(N.A.)
Indecent A & B on Mentally Retarded Person	0.2%	(2)	N.A.	(N.A.)
Unnatural Acts	1.7%	(17)	11.0%	(38)
Total	63.2%	(640)	75.9%	(261)
Rape of Child Under 16	3.3%	(33)	2.3%	(8)
Rape of Child	30.9%	(313)	13.1%	(45)
Assault W.I. Rape Child	2.9%	(29)	5.2%	(18)
Indecent A & B on Child	17.5%	(177)	8.7%	(30)
Unnatural Acts on Child	0.7%	(7)	2.6%	(9)
Incest	1.2%	(12)	2.3%	(8)
Total	42.4%	(429)	26.4%	(91)

Note: Because sex offenders can be charged with more than one offense, the columns sum to more than the total number of sex offenders and to more than 100%.

Table 2. Governing Offense of Secondary Sex Offenders

Governing Offense	%	(N)
Homicides and Attempts	26.0%	(31)
Robbery	21.8%	(26)
Armed Assaults	17.6%	(21)
Property Offense	17.6%	(21)
Kidnapping	12.6%	(15)
Drug Offense	2.5%	(3)
Sexually Related Offense	1.7%	(2)
Total	100.0%	(119)

Where are the Sex Offenders?

Sex offenders were located in various institutions at all security levels. Sex offenders are prohibited from being placed at forestry camps (Plymouth and Warwick) and the Medfield Prison Project. The proportion of sex offenders ranged from 34.3% of the population at NCC, to 0.0% of the population at several facilities (Plymouth, Warwick, Medfield, Longwood, Drug Rehab, and Hodder House). Sex offenders comprised a higher proportion of the total population of lower security facilities (18.2%) than of secure facilities (15.4%). (See Table 3.)

How Does This Compare With The Past?

Because of changes in the criminal statutes regarding sex offenses, it is difficult to make a direct comparison of the sex offender population between 1988 and 1978. However, some general trends can be noted.

On January 1, 1978, the DOC had a population of 2,750, of which 10.9% had a sex offense as their governing offense and 1.6% had a sex offense as a non-governing offense. *Thus, ten years ago, 12.5% of the DOC population had a sex offense as a governing or non-governing offense.* This represented a population of 344 inmates. Between 1978 and 1988, the number of sex offenders tripled, and the proportion of sex offenders in the DOC population increased from 12.5% to 16.2%.

Table 3. Institutional Placement

Facility	%	N
NCC	34.3%	(59)
Norfolk PRC	31.5%	(17)
Boston State	27.3%	(27)
Shattuck	26.7%	(4)
MHHI	24.2%	(22)
Shirley	24.0%	(99)
S.Middlesex	23.9%	(27)
SECC	21.2%	(138)
NCCI	18.7%	(135)
Lancaster (Male)	18.4%	(21)
Bay State	18.0%	(22)
Concord	15.9%	(122)
Park Drive	14.8%	(8)
Norfolk	14.7%	(177)
Cedar Junction	14.0%	(94)
Hillside	13.1%	(5)
OCCC	10.6%	(25)
Charlotte	6.7%	(1)
Lancaster (Female)	4.3%	(2)
Framingham	2.3%	(7)
Plymouth	0.0%	(0)
Medfield	0.0%	(0)
Warwick	0.0%	(0)
Longwood	0.0%	(0)
Drug Rehab	0.0%	(0)
Hodder	0.0%	(0)
Total	16.2%	(1012)
Security Level		
Secure	15.4%	(702)
Lower	18.2%	(310)
Total	16.2%	(1012)

Note: % represents proportion of total population in each facility.

N represents number in each facility.

Besides increases in the number and proportion of sex offenders, the composition of the sex offender population changed over the last decade. In 1978, 75.9% of the sex offenders had one or more charges involving an adult victim, and 26.4% had one or more charges involving a minor as a victim. During the past ten years the proportion of sex offenders with young victims increased from 26.4% to 42.4%.

Summary.

The following points can be made in summary about the size and location of the sex offender population:

1. The DOC has a population of 1,012 sex offenders, representing 16.2% of the total population.
2. These offenders are placed in a large number of facilities at various security levels, but constitute a larger proportion of the population at lower security levels than higher ones.
3. Of all sex offenders, 42.4% are incarcerated as a result of at least one offense involving a minor.
4. The number of sex offenders tripled over the last ten years and grew as a proportion of the total population.
5. The composition of the sex offender population changed over the past decade. Sex offenders with young victims were more prevalent in 1988 than in 1978.

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1. How Many Sex Offenders Are There? And, Where Are They?
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3. Sentencing Patterns Among Sex Offenders
4. Comparative Analysis of Rapists, Child Molesters, Other Violent Offenders, and Non-Violent Offenders
5. Descriptive Analysis of Sex Offenders: The Offense and The Offenders.
6. Recidivism Rates of the Sex Offender Population

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